

Local

General aviation lacking

New airports needed

General aviation airports throughout Texas are inadequate and 25 new urban airports are needed for the state to continue attracting industry, says a Texas Transportation Institute researcher.

Many existing general aviation airports have not been maintained or modernized and require substantial investment to bring them up to acceptable standards, notes George B. Dresser, statistician at TTI.

General aviation airports serve privately owned aircraft and not commercial air carriers, including planes for agricultural aviation, charter flying and special purposes such as emergency medical service. Dresser said these airports provide for separation of large and small airplanes and provide for efficient movement of air traffic.

New plants locating in smaller communities in the South have an increasing dependence on corporate and business aviation, he said.

The backlog of general aviation airport grant applications for state and federal funds exceeds \$50 mil-

lion. Dresser said without substantial changes in funding, this backlog will increase and conditions of general aviation airports in Texas will continue to decline.

Dresser said some existing airports must be reconstructed, and others need to be replaced because the present site is no longer adequate. Many cannot handle the larger, faster aircraft used by industry executives.

He said Texas has relied on privately owned airports, particularly in urban areas. But airports no

longer represent the highest priced use of land for a private owner, and except for a few operated by aviation enthusiasts, urban airports are fast disappearing.

Land costs, public opposition and airspace considerations make it increasingly difficult to locate new general aviation airports in urban areas. Dresser said that smaller communities have neither the support nor the tax base to develop airports to meet the needs of the cities.



Peachy keen

Staff photo by Greg Gammon

Lisa Brown, Texas A&M Horticulture Club president, displays some of the Fredricksburg 'Loring' peaches on sale at the Plant Sciences Building. A bumper crop of peaches this

summer has left an ample supply on the market. The sale is a fund-raising project for the club. Each 1/2-bushel box of peaches sells for \$12.00 ... while they last.

A&M ship to serve as 'floating headquarters' for Titanic search

The search by a Texas oilman for the ill-fated liner Titanic has thrown the spotlight on one of the nation's busiest research ships — the 174-foot Gyre, operated by Texas A&M University.

The Navy-owned Gyre will serve as the floating headquarters for the Titanic expedition, says the Texas A&M official in charge of the ship.

Despite the glamour attached to the Titanic hunt, science will proceed as usual aboard the Gyre, said Capt. T.K. Treadwell, an oceanographer and manager of the University's marine operations.

Although the research vessel is taking part in the Titanic venture, it does so as a part of a two-month long series of geological and oceanographic studies in the Atlantic scheduled last year, Treadwell said.

Although many people see only the glamour involved in the hunt for the Titanic — which sank in 1912 at a cost of more than 1,500 lives — the project will have important scientific merits, Treadwell said.

"The technology being tested in locating and photographing the Titanic could be used by the Navy in rescuing submarine crews or in recovering valuable or sensitive equipment from the ocean bed," he said.

The Gyre carries a crew of 10 and can accommodate up to 19 scientists and their equipment, he said.

Simply running the research vessel costs about \$6,000 a day, Treadwell said, but that figure didn't worry Abilene oil millionaire and Titanic hunter Jack Grimm since the cost is below average for such a research vessel.

Demands on the Gyre for scientific studies and student training have been so great, Treadwell said, that voyages must often be scheduled a year ahead of time.

During recent times, the ship has averaged 280 days a year away from its home port of Galveston, putting into other harbors only for supplies, repairs or to pick up a new group of scientists.

In 1979 the Gyre set a new world record of 349 days away from home.

Equipment aboard the ship includes such standard research instruments as salinographs, thermographs, a computer, a magnetometer, dredges, sample bottles and other instruments for studying the sea and ocean bottom, Treadwell said. Like seagoing scientists everywhere, those aboard the Gyre often lease any highly specialized equipment rather than

buying the piece, he said.

The Gyre had already been scheduled by researchers at Scripps Institution of Oceanography and the U.S. Geological Survey to carry out two other scientific voyages in the Atlantic when the opportunity came up to add the Titanic project, he said.

"The three cruises are so closely related in nature (basic seafloor geology and water sampling) that the Gyre won't return to port after the Titanic phase," Treadwell said.

"Many of the scientists and much of their equipment will stay on board for all three experiments."

No Texas A&M scientists will be aboard the Gyre during the summer Atlantic cruises, which Treadwell said it is not unusual.

Most of the major oceanographic study centers routinely swap scientists and ships to make the most efficient use of limited research money, he said.

The Gyre left its summer base of operations at Woods Hole, Mass., in early June and won't return until a geological study of the Georges Bank region is completed later this month, Treadwell said.

From there, the ship is scheduled to sail to South Carolina, Brazil and along the equator before returning to Galveston in late December.

Treadwell said one emphasis of the Texas A&M oceanographic program has been the hands-on training of students, making the University one of only a handful that can offer students such experience before graduation.

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